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THE

MAHOMMEDANS OF INDIA.

A Lecture

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THE MAHOMMEDANS OF INDIA.

I STAND here to-night, not merely in performance of the duty I owe you as a member of this Association, but also to fulfil in some respect a duty I owe to my co-religionists at large, whose voice has been hitherto unheard amongst you.

The delicate handling which the nature of the subject requires, combined with the necessity of hurting as few susceptibilities as possible, makes a discourse on the Mahommedans of India peculiarly difficult. You will, therefore, I hope, make every allowance for my shortcomings. In this discourse, I shall, in the first place, try to give you a brief sketch of the early Mahommedans; and then rapidly passing in review before you the various causes which led to the decadence of the Mahommedan community under British rule, I shall state, in the second place, some of the remedies required; I shall then explain the new movement for education and social amelioration going on amongst us; and shall conclude with an account of the social condition of our women.

But before I enter upon the real subject of the lecture, let me call your attention to the vague application by English people of the term Mahommedan or Mussulman. Sometimes it is used to signify the faith or religion of the Arabian prophet, and sometimes the people who profess that faith in India. Such indiscriminate use of these terms gives rise to great recklessness in talk as well as writing. I beg you to remember, that throughout my discourse, by the terms Mussulman and Mahommedan, I mean the nation, and the people, without any reference to their creed; though religion is the national bond amongst them, just as among many other nations.

From the description of Mahommedan historians—the best authorities on the state of society in India at the time of their conquest—it would appear that the condition of Hindostan about that period was as miserable as can be conceived. The old Vedic worship had lost its hold; Brahminism, though successful in expelling Buddhism from India, could not recover its old influence over the minds of its followers; all religious life had become extinct. The various rajas were fighting among themselves; the rajah of Punjab was often in need of assistance from his Mahommedan neighbours against his Hindu rivals.* At such times, the Mussulmans could not help observing the internal dissensions existing among the Hindoos, and the richness of their country. Impelled by the love of conquest, which animates all nations without exception, they gradually advanced their outposts

* See the Habeeb-us-Siyar.

in the Punjab, until one of their sovereigns established, after one decisive battle, the Mahommedan dominion in the heart of Hindustan.

The conquest of India by the Mahommedans occasioned a most extraordinary influence upon the relations of that country with the foreign world, whom, under the generic name of *yavans* and *malechas*, she had kept shut out from herself. The introduction of the Mussulman element broke up, if not effectually, at least to an extent not before surpassed in history, a state of society under which the old gradations of rank had by the process of time acquired so inflexible and rigid a character that all hope of progress from within had become a matter of impossibility.

Many Europeans are under the impression that the Mussulmans entered India in hordes, like the Goths or the Huns in the Western World. One example will sufficiently show the falsity of this notion. Bakhtyar Khilji conquered Bengal with forty horsemen. A learned Bengalli gentleman, in a lecture on "Female Education in Bengal," applied the terms mean and cowardly to the Mahommedans ; but I do not see where the meanness or cowardice lies, nor do I see the need of such hard expressions. It reminds one of those African tribes who, so long as the monarch of the forest is free, call him by all endearing names, but the moment he is down the endearment changes into abuse.

As soon as the Mahommedans settled down after their conquest, the tolerant spirit of their laws showed itself at once in their placing their Hindu fellow-subjects on the same political footing with themselves. The invidious capitation-tax imposed in the first flush of orthodoxy, in consideration of the conquered race remaining subject to its own laws, was abolished in the second century of the empire. Every post of honour and emolument, every dignity was open to the Hindus equally with the Mahommedans. No distinction of race or creed was ever made. The Hindu chiefs were equally entrusted with the commands of armies, and were equally the counsellors of the sovereigns.*

Every single fact shows that, prior to the time of Aurungzebe, whose reign saw the commencement of the decline of the Mogul Empire, a result of his bigotry and narrow-mindedness, the Hindus were politically in no way inferior to the Mahommedans, nor occupied a lower status.

On the death of Aurungzebe the magnificent fabric of the Mogul Empire began crumbling to pieces ; and by the time of Mohammed Shah it was a total wreck. Like the hundreds of vampires which in the Indian story spring up with the fall of the master-magician, to drag him down into their regions, so the weakness of Aurungzebe's successors raised up a host of enemies on every side, with whom, on account of their incapacity, they were unable to cope. The Mahratta marauders began plundering up to the gates of Delhi ; and though they received a terrible blow at Panipat, from the hands of the invincible Durrani, with his retreat to the mountains they at once recommenced their system of plunder. India became a scene of misery and misrule ; the various chieftains who had started up in the provinces were fighting among themselves ; the sovereign was a prisoner in his own capital. There was no order and no law. Take a page from the last days of the Roman Empire, and instead of the proconsul and the Goths, read Indian satraps and Mahrattas or Affghans, and you will have an idea of the condition of the people.

Whilst the country was in this strait, the British, mere traders at first, presented themselves in the garb of auxiliaries of one satrap against another. Before long, however, for the future happiness of India, they threw off this character, and appeared as the protectors of law and order in Hindustan. In the miserable plight into which India had fallen after the general disruption of the Mahommedan Empire, the appearance of a power

* Compare Davenport (Apology for Mohammed) p. 100—102.

which could lay the demons of anarchy and misrule; which could curb the marauding spirit of freebooters and plunderers brought forth by the times; which could reunite into one homogeneous whole, the jarring elements into which Indian society had broken up, and could become to India the medium of intercommunication with the West—already monopolising the leadership of thought—the appearance of such a power was providential. It has been said in England that "the memories of past sovereigns in the minds of Mussulmans are incompatible with their loyalty to the British rule." I for one do not see the logic of this reasoning. A Mahommedan may have memories of past sovereigns, and yet fully appreciate the blessings of peace and justice, law, and order—in fact, be perfectly loyal and faithful to the British Government.

I have so far referred to the past to give you an idea of the present.

Among the Mahommedans inhabiting the different parts of India, the same ethnical differences are observable as among the Hindus.

I do not know much of Southern India, and therefore confine my remarks generally to the valley of the Ganges, comprehending Bengal proper and the tableland of Hindustan.

In Northern India, the province of Behar inclusive, the Mahommedans are as a rule the descendants of the old settlers from the countries westward of the Punjab, or of converts from the higher Hindu castes like the Rajpoots, who, on their conversion, were designated Pathans, and into whose fraternity they were admitted on account of a strong similarity in traits of character and a congenial disposition.

The vernacular language of the Mussulmans in these parts is Urdu, or Hindustani—a composite language like English, formed by the intermixture of the various races brought together by the Mahommedan conquest, and possessing within itself an expansiveness and elasticity hardly surpassed by any other language that I am aware of. From Punjab as far down as Bhagulpoor, in the Lieut.-Governorship of Bengal, Urdu, more or less pure, is not only the vernacular of the Mahommedans, but also of the majority of Hindus.

After Bhagulpoor commences the region of the Bengalli dialect. If a straight line were drawn, dividing the district of Poorneah into two, from north to south, and were then continued through the districts of Bhagulpoor and Beerbhoom, it would roughly mark off the two regions.

Many Mahommedan families have settled, quite in recent times, from the North-west and Behar in Bengal proper. These are called Hindustanis, and few of them ever understand Bengalli. In most of the districts of Upper Bengal, such as Beerbhoom, Midnapoor, Dinajpoor, Monghyr, Poorneah, and to some extent the English district of the twenty-four Pergunaahs, the Mahommedans speak Urdu, though not with the same purity as a native of Lucknow or Delhi, and know only enough of Bengalli for the purposes of social intercourse with their Hindu neighbours.

Eastward, Urdu becomes merely the town language of the Mahommedans, Bengalli being the vernacular of the rural Mussulmans, which might to some extent be said of some parts of Upper Bengal. And so it goes on dwindling in influence until at last, in the deltaic districts, it loses all its vitality, the Mussulmans here speaking a *patois* of the Bengalli dialect.

Urdu, however, as the language of the conquering nation, is understood throughout India, at least wherever the Mahommedan power made itself felt. I gave you this sketch of the ethnological division of the Mussulmans to make the following remarks more intelligible.

From the time of the establishment of the British dominion until the Governor-Generalship of Lord William Bentinck, the Mahommedans held an equal rank with the other Indian races. Every department of State service was open to and occupied by them along with the Hindus. Some

of the Governor-Generals were warm patrons of Mussulman learning. The memory of the Marquis of Wellesley and the Marquis of Hastings is even now dear to the Mahommedan population. Up to the time of Lord William Bentinck, Hindustani-Persian was the official language of the Government. In introducing English as the State language of India, our British rulers did not allow the Indian Mussulmans sufficient time to prepare themselves for the sudden though inevitable change.

The Hindus, especially the Bengallis, being perhaps less conservative, more ductile, or more in favour with the governing race, soon supplanted the Mahommedans in almost every office in the Government employ.* Under their own sovereigns the army was open to the Mussulmans. The British Government excluded them from their proper vocation. Other nations, in the dearth of any other occupation, have taken to commerce as a last resource ; but the Mussulman aristocrat almost equals the German *junker* in his contempt of trade. And even had he eschewed his pride, commerce would hardly have furnished him with a calling, in the sense in which the term is here understood.

Until the time of Lord William Bentinck, the whole system of education throughout Bengal and Northern India was on a Mahommedan basis, and those thus educated held the State patronage. In the meantime, a new system of education was placed side by side with the old, and men began to be trained up, who, belonging as they did to a different race, could adapt themselves more easily to the new order of things. Suddenly the old system was abolished, and those who had felt secure in a fool's paradise soon found themselves supplanted by men who had been specially trained according to the new method. The Mussulmans would easily have followed the example of their Hindu compatriots, and reconciled themselves to the altered state of circumstances. But our British rulers of those days, whilst trying to impart to us, conjointly with the Hindus, a knowledge of the arts and sciences of the West, failed to make adequate provision for the simple elementary education of one of the most important sections of their Indian subjects. The Hindoos from the beginning had the sympathy of the English They had primary schools of their own giving instruction in their own vernacular—a language as foreign to the Mahommedan as Urdu is to the Bengalli. The teachers in these schools, in the Lower Provinces, are, with rare exceptions, Hindus of Bengal ; their Urdu is always confined to a few words picked up from De Rozario's Dictionary. Under these circumstances the difficulty of the situation for a Mahommedan may be easily imagined.†

The *Maktabs* and the *Madrassas* (scholastic establishments) which existed among the Mahommedans till very lately (and some of which still exist), could easily have been utilised for the purpose of primary education. The Mahommedans would not then have been forced to attend institutions where they are regarded as mere intruders. But our rulers, whilst fully alive to the advantages of elementary education, through the vernacular, for the Hindus, overlooked the very existence of those educational institutions among the Mahommedans.

In Eastern Bengal the vernacular language of the Mussulmans is, as you have seen, closely related to Bengalli. Here then, at least, you will say, they could have made use of the Hindoo institutions. But in their case we meet with another difficulty, not altogether without influence in Behar and Upper Bengal, but having a more powerful and decided influence here—a difficulty which owes its origin to the religious prejudices of the people.

* This passage applies more to the early acquisitions of the E. I. Company like Bengal, Behar, Orissa, and the provinces ceded by the Nawab Vizier.

† Compare Dr. Hunter's work on the Mussulmans.

The circumstances which led to the conversion of the semi-Hindu population of Eastern Bengal, who till then had professed a pseudo-Brahminism on sufferance, made them the most zealous proselytes to the religion of their new masters, who recognised no distinction of race or colour. Far from the humanising influence of the Mogul Court—leading much the life their fathers had led ten centuries before on those small hereditary fields—the people of these parts have retained up to the present moment the religious prejudices—the bigotry—of the old proselytising days—a bigotry which is intensified tenfold by the agrarian feelings of the peasantry against their Hindu middlemen and landlords.* The new system of education, instead of delicately handling their prejudices and making them subservient to the ends of civilisation, either completely ignored or contemned them. These Eastern Mahommedans, though speaking a Bengalli *patois*, are far from willing to accept instruction at the hands of a Bengalli. Besides, they, along with other Mahommedans, consider some degree of religious instruction as absolutely necessary for the proper performance of the duties of private life. In European countries, religion and morality, two convertible terms, are very often kept distinct from the domain of law. But law is nothing more than morality legalised ; what you consider right you make legal. But often in Europe, as perhaps often in the East, what is right is not legal, and what is legal is not right.

Even in this country it is oftentimes found necessary to add religious instruction to secular training.

Among the Mahommedans, more than any other people, their laws embody their principles of morality, and are intimately wound up with the everyday duties of their life. Every Mahommedan is required to know something of those duties. In the absence of an established hierarchy like that which the Jews and the Christians possess in common with the Hindoos, all-pervading in its power, every Mahommedan is bound in his person to know something more of his religion than can be acquired by occasional visits to a place of worship.

It is not surprising if, influenced by such ideas, the Mussulman has hitherto abstained from sending his children to institutions where, according to him, they are not only exposed to the unhealthy atmosphere of the companionship of polytheistical youths, but where they are also likely to succumb to the insinuating influences of the rival creed.

In Upper India, where Urdu is the language commonly spoken both by Hindus and Mahommedans, and where the latter do not labour under any peculiar disadvantages, as they do in Bengal, another motive acts conjointly with the religious motive as a deterrent principle—I mean the absence of sufficient moral training. In India, in the Government schools and colleges, the machinery employed for the instruction of youths is unrivalled ; but, whilst a small proportion of the large number who take advantage of these educational establishments receive a high mental and moral training, the majority acquire only enough to inspire them with an overweening confidence in themselves and a supercilious contempt for those who do not happen to know the English language. It is not the contempt of knowledge towards ignorance : it is the contempt of shallowness for what it does not understand. Both among Hindus and Mussulmans, those who have thoroughly entered into the spirit of Western civilisation and Western knowledge pay the greatest regard to the literature and civilisation of their own ancestors. The majority of the English-educated youths, however, remain satisfied with a small modicum of knowledge in the shape of English composition and literature. Possessing no acquaintance with the nobler

* The Titu Myan riots, dignified by some people with the name of a religious insurrection, were simply agrarian in their nature—though the feelings of the peasantry might have been aggravated by difference of creed.

parts of Western civilisation, or of their own, their manners remain on a par with their knowledge. Their contempt for everything Indian shows itself in the reckless disregard of the common ordinances of society. Their life becomes a life of mimicry and imitation. The facile Hindoo, a philosopher every inch of him, whilst regretting all this, does not feel the need of renouncing on that account any of the advantages. The old father, representative of an old school, submits with the most praiseworthy philosophy to the supercilious airs of his educated son, and permits himself to be called hard names in the choicest English. There is no cutting off with a shilling out there.

But the proud and sensitive Mahommedan, proud of his historic civilisation and historic refinement, is shocked and disgusted at this result of Western education. In terror and fear, he keeps or takes away his sons from places where, instead of learning the amenities of life under the vaunted auspices of English-educated men, they even forget to pay a decent regard to the requirements of good breeding. Ask any Mahommedan from the North-west, or Behar, why he does not allow his sons the benefits of English education ; he will answer by pointing to its general results. Do not for one moment suppose that I mean to reflect upon those gentlemen, Mahommedan or Hindoo, who form the *élite* of the English-educated in our country, and who, from their intellectual acquirements and high moral culture are, an honour to India. I speak of the majority. Everybody cannot receive the highest training ; mental acquirements must depend on circumstances ; the majority can have but a partial education—something suited to their future prospects in life. The fault is that they receive no moral training with their mental education—a moral training, not on the basis of any particular religion or creed, but on the broad foundations of genuine culture.

Again, throughout Upper India, Behar, and Western Bengal, a knowledge of Persian and Arabic is essential to every Mahommedan with the least pretension to a liberal education. Persian, which may indeed be regarded as the sweetest and softest language in the world, is throughout Mahommedan India, and even among the Hindoos of Upper Hindustan, the language of polite life ; its polished, flowing accents add to the charms of a refined circle ; its enchanting poets, depreciated only by those who cannot understand the life and beauty within them, are the delight of every Mussulman home. Every gentleman carries on his correspondence in Persian, and has in general to conform to Persian rules of etiquette.

Arabic, besides containing some of the proudest monuments of the human intellect on what are called profane subjects, is, as you know, the sacred language of the Mussulmans. Almost the whole of their religious literature is contained therein. Some knowledge of this language, too, becomes requisite for a gentleman, to obtain for him a proper consideration among his peers. Urdu is his native tongue, and every Mussulman is, *prima facie*, bound to know it. Hence you see the disadvantage under which the Mahommedan labours in competing with the Hindu. In the general absence of any provision in the Government schools for the study of Mussulman learning in conjunction with English—the open sesame to all the goods of life—he is obliged to spend some of the best years of his youth in acquiring a knowledge of Persian and of Arabic.

The Hindu in general cares little for any other language but English. The start he thus gets in beginning, enables him to keep his Mahommedan competitor far behind him in the race of life, as is plainly exemplified in the Indian Civil Service. There is not, to my knowledge, one Mahommedan among the many Indian gentlemen who have entered the service. This is not the result of any innate superiority in the Hindu, for where Mahommedans have had a fair chance they have more than held their own. It is the natural result of the concentration of the young and precocious Hindu mind on *one* subject, whilst the Mussulman is occupied with several.

I have seen young men above twenty sitting side by side with young Hindu boys, studying the English language. The ludicrousness of this sight deters many from entering schools, and I have known cases where because above the limit of age, which in Bengal I believe is 16, they have been refused admission. You will realise the importance attached by Mahommedans to a study of the Persian language by itself, when I tell you that in the Hooghly College, out of some fifty boys, who, in the English classes had no means of learning Persian, twenty-four regularly attended an extra class at an extra hour, when they were fagged after their day's work, and this of their own option.

These are decided evils, requiring decided remedies ; but of the remedies I shall speak later. I must now refer to some other circumstances which have affected the prosperity of the Mussulmans.

The Mahommedan sovereigns and chieftains were, from the earliest times, in the habit of bestowing rent-free lands on individuals and families, either in requital of distinguished services, or as grants for charitable and pious uses. As long as the house of Taimur was powerful enough to exact obedience to its laws, imperial confirmation was essentially requisite to every grant, whether by the local landowners or by the viceroys. But during the times of anarchy which followed the downfall of the Mogul Empire, *sannads* used to be granted directly by the chieftains themselves, and such *sannads*, or deeds of gift, were deemed to vest an effectual and valid title in the grantees. The validity of these titles was —if not openly, at least tacitly—acknowledged by the British Government for about three-quarters of a century. But about and during the time of Lord William Bentinck's administration the Government was seized with a desire to examine the title-deeds and *sannads* of every proprietor and *Jageerdar*, and of every *Wakf* estate. The scene of confusion and terror which ensued is well-described in the graphic pages of Mr. W. Hunter, but the tale of woe should be heard from the lips of those who suffered. Most of the *sannads*, with the imperial confirmations, were lost by the silent inroads of time, or white ants, or destroyed by Mahratta rapine; but there was a prescriptive right to uphold all, sannad or no sannad. The great famine of 1770 had impoverished thousands of Mahommedan families in common with the Hindus. The Cornwallis settlement followed; but it affected only those, who allowed their Hindu farmers to settle with Government officers for the payment of the State revenue, and thus get themselves enrolled as the real proprietors.

The Resumption proceedings, although intended to apply to both races, fell heaviest on the Mussulmans. The Hindus, for the most part, had recent titles, and were thus safe. But every Mahommedan family and every Mahommadan endowment which failed to prove the *sannads* under which they possessed proprietory rights, as gifts from the imperial court of Delhi, were immediately ousted from their possessions. *

Hundreds of princely families who had enjoyed fiefs and estates and *jageers* for years and years were thus completely beggared, or reduced to penurious straits. Some of those who came out of the ordeal unscathed, were devoured by harpies in the shape of Hindu money-lenders. Add to this, reckless hospitality—in the spirit of the old Barmecide,—ostentatiousness in the manner of military conquerors ; in fact, extravagance of every sort, combined with the subdivision of property, and it will be apparent why now one large landowner is found in places where half-a-century ago there would have been fifty.

I have not said much about the Mahommedans of Oude, but the causes which led to their decline in that province are too fresh to need comment.

* See the short apologetic account of this measure in Meadows Taylor's "History of India." Even the Nawab Vizier's grants were held invalid.

Among the Mussulmans education is a primary principle of their Code. It is incumbent on every Mahommedan to educate his children, male and female, according to his means. Hence, at the first entry of the British and for many subsequent years, India was covered with educational establishments endowed by sovereigns or by private individuals. These institutions gave instruction in Mussulman learning, at one time the best the world possessed; and even now, if the patristic love which often encrusts it, could be taken off, not lacking in depth, and force, and beauty; not alone sufficient for the exigencies of modern life, but yet necessary for the formation of the national character.

Every gentleman of means and position formerly maintained one or two tutors (as is sometimes the case still); this not only for the instruction of the children of the house, but also for those who liked to avail themselves of their assistance. It is the bounden duty of every Mahommedan, whatever his position, to give instruction to any man who comes to him. If a man were to come to me and ask me to explain to him any book within the scope of my knowledge, and were I to decline without any sufficient reason, I should act in direct contravention of the Mussulman law. *Maktab-khanas*, a sort of primary schools, were attached to every mosque; and *Madrassas*, institutions of a higher class, were numerous. * A wise Government, animated with a desire of justice towards all its subjects, a desire of promoting the public weal and private happiness of all its people, without distinction of race, creed, or colour, would at once have seized on these ready-to-hand institutions, immediately purified them of all their corruptions, and, whilst keeping up a shadow of their old teaching, would have made them the vehicles of its own ideas and a grand machinery for ruling the nation by the teachers of its youth; it would have struck at the core of all bigoted feelings (where there existed any) by enrolling the sympathies and the interest of the ordinary *moolla;* it would have bound up English with Mussulman learning; and, in doing all this, would have thrown the whole responsibility on those very Mahommedans, by entrusting the management and supervision of these primary institutions —say, under British guidance—to committees of men selected from their race.

But the British Government was too busy at the time. Its action often was more cruel than its indifference. The Inam Commission dealt a blow to these indigenous institutions, from which they will never recover. Only under the enlightened policy of our present high-minded Viceroy is it that the Government is becoming aware of the mistake it then committed.

Whilst British officers were trying to utilise Hindoo *Putshalas*, whilst they were trying to establish normal schools, and training schools, and schools of all sorts for the Hindoos, they allowed the Mahommedan institutions to die off by the decline of their private supporters, or the resumption of the endowments to which they appertained. Looking at these facts can it be said that the Government of those days did not fail in its duty, towards us?

The truth is, that for the rough-and-ready way of civilising India which was then in vogue, the Mahommedans were found to be rather an unmalleable material; the stamping-out system which answered with the Hindus did not succeed with the Mahommedans. They were therefore left to take care of themselves. The nation which prizes independence of character so much in itself ought to have appreciated it in others, and seen the real worth lying beneath the hard surface of the material. It ill becomes a Teutonic race to place a pliant and flexible nature before one of which the prominent characteristics are pride and sturdiness.

* Even at the time of Dr. Buchanan's survey many of these *Maktabs* were existing, attached to religious endowments.

The Christian missionaries, the first pioneers among the Hindus of European learning—whose character as the disciples of the great Teacher of Christianity ought to have preserved them from unworthy prejudices—actuated by the rivalry of creeds, were the noisiest in the reprobation of the Mahommedans and of Mahommedan institutions. They, who ought to have helped us in keeping alive our old educational and scholastic establishments as the germs of our regeneration, and the means of imparting Western knowledge, were only too glad to see their decline. The legacy of hatred bequeathed by the unholy wars of 600 years ago in Western Asia still bears fruit in the European mind.

However, from some of the recent resolutions of the Government of India, it appears that British officials are at last becoming alive to the desirability of warding off the complete extinction of Mussulman learning from among the Indian Mahommedans. And it is to be hoped that the Government would immediately set itself to work in utilising the wrecks of the old Mussulmanic educational establishments for purposes of primary and preparatory education to the Mahommedans.

The Mahommedans themselves are awakening to the necessity of making an effort to save their community from utter decadence. The Mussulmans of the North-west, as represented by their presiding genius, Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadoor, are trying to find out the real causes lying at the root of all the evils at present afflicting the Mahommedan community. Prizes have been set apart for the best Urdu essays on the subject.

In Behar and Bengal also, the Mussulmans have become sensible of the difficulties of the situation. In Calcutta and Behar—the two centres of thought among the Mahommedans of these parts—the influential people are not only willing and ready to assist Government in its work of amelioration among the Mussulman masses, but are themselves endeavouring to improve the condition of the nation at large. The two Mahommedan societies at these places have entered heart and soul into the work of reform and improvement. In Upper India measures are being taken to establish a cheap daily paper for the people to be sold at railway stations by sweetmeat-sellers throughout the Urdu-speaking districts, from Bhagulpoor, in Bengal, far up to the Punjab. This proposed newspaper, I am told, is not intended to be the organ of any particular race, but rather of the whole of the Urdu-speaking people, both Hindoo and Mahommedan.

The "Mahommedan Social Reformer," published at Allygarh, represents to a great extent the new ideas which are in action among us. There is every sign, there is every hope, that we have now reached the turning point of the crisis in our social existence; once safely through this stage, we shall not be behind any nation in the march of progress. But the present is the moment when assistance, direct and indirect, is most needed from an impartial Government to enable us to renovate our national and social life. In asking for and expecting so much, we do not mean that the British should deal unfairly with any other of the subject races. The British, in their capacity of peace-makers in India, can afford to be just and fair towards all. We do not wish to see the Hindoos thrust out from all educational institutions. We do not desire a monopoly of State patronage; we do not wish that the Government schools and colleges should dispense Mahommedan learning only, to the exclusion of Western knowledge and literature; we do not ask that the money taken from the Hindoos should be spent on us. It would be unfortunate indeed if any Mahommedan ever wished for all or any of these things. What we want is, that the British in India should observe the strictest impartiality between the various races of the Empire.

The October number of the "Cornhill Magazine," in an anti-Mahommedan article, said, "that our chief grievance lies in the policy of indifference

and non-intervention which the British hold in their dealings with the Indian races." No Government can well be indifferent to the political, social, or moral welfare of any section of its subjects, much less of a mighty proportion, amounting at the lowest estimate to some thirty millions. It may be indifferent to their religious customs, but not to their social or moral concerns. And hence it is that the British Government has established schools, more or less assisted by imperial aids, for the proper education of its Hindoo subjects in Western learning and their own language and literature. The Mahommedans want the same. We require assistance in transforming our old scholastic establishments, wherever these may be found existing, into primary and preparatory schools where the English language will be taught in conjunction with our own. And when necessary, we expect the same assistance in the formation of new ones; but where separate establishments are not needed, we require that Mussulman teachers should be attached to the Hindoo institutions for instructing Mussulman youths in their vernacular and Persian. We also require training institutions for teachers speaking our own language, we require that a fair proportion of the money we pay unto the State should be applied towards our education and social amelioration. Above all, we require the funds of Mahommedan endowments to be utilised for the education of Mahommedans; and when they enter the Government schools and colleges we expect that they should be placed on an equal footing with their Hindoo fellow-subjects. At present the principle of exclusion is so powerful, that while the representatives of other races make use of Mahommedan endowments and enjoy Mahommedan scholarships, the Mahommedans in the Calcutta Presidency College itself, I am told, are debarred from holding a graduate scholarship.

The movement for Western education at present going on among the majority of Indian Mahommedans is combined with a desire for cutting off the excrescences which have gathered on their simple religious system from ages of contact with the various races of the Empire. The Mussulmans, in the effort to elevate the subject nations, degraded themselves; they paid the penalty exacted by an avenging Nemesis, by adopting many of the superstitious customs and observances of the Hindoos; most of the Hindoo converts retained all their old associations, all their old habits of thought, and handed them down to their descendants, like the Western barbarians who continued to worship Odin and Freya under the names and symbols of Christ and the Virgin.

The Mahommedans of India, as you are aware, are divided into two great sects—the Soonnites and the Shiites; these again are divided into many sub-sections. The two principal sects differ from each other on many doctrinal as well as historical points. But the feeling is universal amongst educated Mahommedans, whether belonging to the one or the other sect, that primary secular education should include some moral and religious training, and that Islam, shaking off the mass of superstitions which have become attached to it, should revert to its original purity. In the present state of society among the Mahommedans themselves, the practical application of the former principle is not unattended with difficulties. But I may remark that the addition of a few chapters of the Koran to the curriculum of studies (say, in the primary schools), with some general ethical treatises, without any intermixture of sectarian or dogmatic theology, would go far towards conciliating the religious prejudices of the Mussulmans of all sects.

The idea of a reform is grand in its nature, and deserves the attention and appreciation of the people whose forefathers originated the Teutonic revolt in the Latin Church. As among the Christians, this phase of thought in the Mussulman world to all appearances leads and will lead to a rigid, uncompromising literalism in one direction, and a noble rationalism in the other.

Some recent occurrences, which, on account of their political character, I am debarred from discussing here, have strengthened the old English notion that Islam is a religion of aggression, and that, such being the case, a Mahommedan *renaissance* must mean the manifestation of a principle of war.*

More utterly mistaken ideas cannot exist. Every religion, in some stage of its career, has been aggresive. Biassed as people are by the prejudices of thirteen centuries, it may surprise many to hear that Islam is essentially a religion of peace. To take one example. There is nothing in Islam which is not compatible with the most absolute loyalty to a *de facto* sovereign of whatever creed. Islam makes it the duty of every Moslem, when once he has accepted the protection of a non-Mahommedan sovereign —when once he has taken up the status of a *Mustameen*—to repay by absolute loyalty the protection he enjoys ; he is bound to assist the sovereign against the public enemies, and to observe the municipal laws of the State equally with them. It is only in cases of extreme religious persecution and civil ostracism that the Mussulmans are allowed to have recourse to arms. If a Government were to prevent its Mahommedan subjects from observing the ordinances of their religion ; or if it were to forbid them to obey the call to prayer, or attendance at mosques ; or were to interfere with the quiet enjoyment of private rights and privileges according to the Moslem code ; or if it allowed people of other faiths to maltreat Mahommedans whilst proceeding to their places of worship, or to insult such places, &c., then—and even then only with a reasonable hope of success are they permitted to take up arms against the *de facto* Government. But if there is no reasonable hope of success, the Moslems must migrate. The Moriscoes of Spain furnish an example. They were richer and wealthier than the Indian Mussulmans, and certainly not their inferior in warlike prowess ; but when they found that the fanaticism of the bigot of the Escurial and his minister made it difficult for them to live in Spain in the due observance of their religious usages, they, instead of claiming those rights, arms in hand, or trying to regain their supremacy, migrated in a body to Africa, and Spain lost for ever her element of vitality.

The Indian Mahommedans are in the full enjoyment of their religious rights (though a few cases to the contrary have been known) ; their mosques are open ; no one interferes with their calls to prayer ; they observe their religious ordinances without the least hindrance. What incentive can they have to rise in arms or abet a conspiracy against the British ? If a Mussulman were to do so, he would act in direct contravention of his religion.

As a social subject of the character under review is apt to be misapprehended for a political matter, I must not enter into further details. But I must claim your indulgence with regard to one point. A small, uninfluential sect in Lower Bengal—recruited for the most part from the ranks of common menial servants, butchers, boatmen, &c., and officered by ill-read bigots, with no lawful careers in life under the British Government—has brought itself of late years into the most unfortunate prominence. The unanimous opinion of the respectable portion of the Mussulman community, the authoritative dicta of four distinct bodies of Moslem jurists,† have condemned the proceedings of this ill-starred body of zealots as iniquitous and contrary to the laws of the Great Prophet. It is most unfortunate, and likely to lead to the most disastrous consequences, that

* I do not allude to the tragical fate of Chief Justice Norman, whatever pain and sorrow I may feel at the loss of one who was not only a personal friend, but also one of the best well-wishers of our community. An individual crime, abhorred by all classes of people, has no connection with social or national questions.

† I allude to the late Fatewas, whose nature has been so much misunderstood by the English people in general.

the English should so far lose their sense of justice as to allow themselves to be prejudiced against the whole nation, on account of the misdeeds of a few individuals. Dissatisfaction with particular measures of Government is very different from disaffection. Both phases of political feeling exist in the very midst of you ; you can differentiate between the two.

I earnestly pray you, therefore, to deal with us more justly and fairly in the uture ; you can scarcely imagine the pain one reckless word spoken by Englishmen causes to that mass of loyal men whose staunch faithfulness has stood the test of more than a hundred years, and difficulties of no uncommon magnitude, and whom, now, in a moment of panic, or under the influence of unworthy passions, the English class together under the head of malcontents and irreconcileables.

With regard to the status of woman among the Mahommedans, very curious and entertaining notions are held in England. It is thought that they are prisoners in dungeons ; it is thought that they are no better than slaves ; that whenever the master of the house gets into a passion, he invariably puts them into a sack and throws them into the sea (however, as there is no sea in India, this must be meant metaphorically) ; it is thought that without rights, without privileges, without education, they drag on a miserable existence, unrelieved by a single ray of light. I wonder what our ladies would say to all this !

Women among the Mahommedans possess exactly the same privileges and rights as the men ; there is no law of "coverture" and "merger" among them ; marriage gives no right to the man which it does not give to the woman.

Marriage among the Mahommedans is essentially a civil contract ; acceptance and consent form the basis of a Mahommedan marriage ; and though in India some Hindu ceremonies are gone through after the deed of marriage has been drawn up and attested, the principle always remains the same. The man is asked whether he accepts the woman as his wife ; he answers in the affirmative ; the woman is asked whether she accepts him as her husband ; she answers "Yes ;" then follow the usual phrases about honour and love. A deed is drawn up by a qualified person in Mahommedan law and duly attested.

In Upper India and Behar, and among the Hindustani Mahommedans in Bengal, men scarcely ever marry under twenty, women never under fifteen or sixeen. But very often men are beyond thirty and women above twenty before they think of marriage. Among the Bengalli Mahommedans early marriages are rather frequent, in imitation of the Bengalli Hindus.

A Mahommedan wife among the lower classes is, from what I have seen and heard in England, decidedly not less happy than a married woman among the lower classes of the English. Among the upper classes, the ladies, though they do not possess the culture and the luxuries of Paris and of London, certainly do not lead the life you mark out for them in your imagination. They rule despotically within their own homes. The husband and the father have to bow to their authority, and though they do not appear among men, their influence does not remain confined within the four walls of the house ; it extends throughout the whole circle of their husband's or father's acquaintances.

Invitations and presents are always sent to the lady of the house, and are sent by the friend's wife, or, in her absence, the eldest female relative. Often, after the mother's death, the eldest daughter, married or unmarried, becomes the centre of home-life. The old English notion of women posessing no souls according to the Moslem creed is, I believe, exploded by this time ; but Westerns generally are still under the impression that Mahommedanism promotes polygamy, or, more properly speaking, polygyny. Nothing better exemplifies the mischievous results of a want of proper information.

Among the pre-Islamite Arabs the condition of woman was extremely wretched and miserable. Polygamy prevailed to an extent simply inconceivable. There were no recognised laws of marriage. The general licentiousness of manners in the surrounding countries about the Prophet's time was, beyond measure, frightful. The amelioration effected in the condition of women by the Mahommedan laws is alone sufficient to stamp Islam as one of the noblest institutions in the universe. By the laws of the Prophet, a man can have four wives provided he can do "justice" among them, that is, treat them with equal regard and affection; otherwise he shall have but one. This simple law, whilst providing for the condition of society in those times, is an indirect but effective prohibition of polygamy. In those days, and even now, the general absence of all provision in Eastern countries, by which women are enabled to procure a livelihood for themselves, served to make polygamy a principle of self-preservation on their part. The law of the Prophet kept in view this fact, whilst doing away with polygamy as an institution. In the present circumstances of the world the prohibitory clause becomes the legal principle of action.

In India, it is only a few of the rich who can afford to have the luxury of several establishments that have more wives than one. Polygamy, as an institution, is fast disappearing under the new light in which the laws of the Prophet are being read. The majority even now disapprove of it; and I may say, on the authority of the "Mahommedan Social Reformer" of September last, that 95 Mahommedans out of every 100 are perfect monogamists.

A Bengalli gentleman, in an address delivered at Birmingham, spoke of us with much asperity. Referring to the result of the Mahommedan conquest on Hindu women, he said (I quote his words as given in the Association's journal): "Their women, who had full liberty during the ancient period, and had received education as in other civilised countries, were deprived of their liberty, the men being obliged to keep their wives and sisters for safety confined to the house." If the Mahommedans had ever been guilty of the deeds the Baboo insinuates, there was no lack of men among the Hindus of the North-west, at any rate, to enact an Eastern Sicilian Vespers.

I do not know, however, whether the Hindu women, prior to the Mahommedan conquest, used or not to come out in public. Possibly they might have done this and more besides. But I once fell in with the translation of a passage from Munnoo which goes directly against the assertions of Bengalli gentlemen of the present day. It runs thus:—"Women," says Munnoo, "love their beds, their seats, their ornaments; they have impure appetites, they love wrath, they show weak flexibility and bad conduct. Day and night women must be kept in subjection."* Munnoo, I must remind those who have not heard of him, was not a Mahommedan; he was a good old Hindoo of the good olden times, when, if we are to believe Bengalli gentlemen, Hindu women used to be worshipped by their lords.

However that might be, the Mahommedans distinctly deny the questionable honour of introducing what you call the Zenana system in India. The Mahommedans had no knowledge of this custom till they entered India. In all Mahommedan countries women appear in public, though with veils; in the Ealyats of Persia, in Kashgaria, in Turkish Bosnia, and various other parts they even dispense with them.†

An explanation of the term *zenana*, and what is supposed to be its

* Tytler's "Considerations on the State of India," vol. i., p. 237.

† Compare "Malcolm's Sketches," "Frontier Lands of the Christian and the Turk," "The Travels of Ibn-Batuta," &c.

Turkish equivalent, *Harem*, will further elucidate the subject. Zenana is a Persian word, signifying women-folk, and, in its secondary acceptation, anything or any place peculiarly belonging to women. The term *Harem* is an Arabic word, and means a sacred place, interdicted to all vulgar access ; and as ladies' apartments are in our eyes sacred as any sanctuary or shrine (and English ladies will, I am sure, appreciate this feeling) we naturally style them *Harem*. Now, in these terms I do not see anything to show that the Mahommedans introduced the custom of utter seclusion into India ; perhaps they prove, on the contrary, that the Mussulmans introduced a nobler conception of women among the nation whose gods took pride in degrading the sex. If the custom did not exist in India before the Conquest, and if the Mahommedans did not adopt it from the Hindoos, it must have resulted from the exclusiveness of the conquering race and its wish to remain separate from the conquered. The exclusive habits of the English in India make the conduct of the Mahommedans intelligible. The Austrians in Lombardy afford another example of this principle. Yet, notwithstanding the baneful influences to which the Mussulmans were exposed, they always allowed their women ampler privileges than exist now in some parts of Europe.

The education of women is as obligatory upon Mahommedans as that of men. And hence it is that from the time of Razia Begum, the daughter of the second Affghan King of Delhi, down to her late Highness, Nawab Secundra Begum, of Bhopal, and her noble and gifted daughter, there has been no lack of ladies of talent and acquirements.*

The machinery of female education among us is interesting in more respects than one. Among the better classes, it is customary to have one or two *Atoos*, or governesses, in the house.

These *Atoos* are invariably well-born, belonging to old decayed families, and obliged by circumstances to procure a livelihood for themselves by private teaching. They are, as a general rule, good Arabic and Persian scholars. They not only teach the daughters of the house, but dispense instruction to the girls of the neighbourhood *gratis*, and with the free permission of the mistress. In Upper India, the course of study includes higher branches of learning than in Behar and Upper Bengal ; in Arabic, I am informed, the ladies often going as far as the *Hedaya*, a profitless work on jurisprudence. But the general curriculum in Persian includes history, poetry, some ethical treatises, and a little arithmetic, and composition ; in Arabic, grammar, reading and construing partially the Koran. In some places the course goes beyond this ; in others it falls short of it.

The education of the poorer classes is always confined to reading a few chapters of the Koran, joined to a little Urdu.

Sewing, embroidery, and other branches of needlework, are considered necessary accomplishments to a lady's education ; and among the upper classes the daughters are, with rare exceptions, well-taught in these arts. Here, again, the girls of the poorer neighbours receive the benefit of that charity which Islam inculcates among its professors, and learn as much of sewing and needlework as the cares of a poor household would allow.

In Upper India and in some parts of Behar, music and also singing are often taught; but these are not considered so requisite as ladies' accomplishments as in Europe. A desire, however, for these ennobling arts is spreading rapidly among the Mahommedans.

Another necessary point in a lady's education is the superintendence of the kitchen. You will recall to mind the story of the cream tarts in the "Arabian Nights;" the fair Indian descendants of those Arab ladies have

* The daughter of the Prophet was one of the most accomplished ladies the world has seen. In India, the daughters of Shah Jahan and of Aurungezebe were remarkable for their political abilities.

not allowed the art of cookery to deteriorate. For myself, I consider the cultivation of the gastronomic art one of the great tests of a nation's progress; and it might possibly be an advantage (socially speaking) if a proper teaching of this branch of learning could be given to the Hindoos of the Lower Provinces, who are behind every other civilised nation in this respect.

English education, with but few exceptions, has made no way amongst Mahommedan ladies. The creation of a desire is necessary to the proper appreciation of any object; and the desire or taste is engendered only by the want or need of that object. Our ladies do not as yet feel the necessity of learning the English language or literature. English ladies in no way interest themselves in their behalf; they do not visit them, they do not care for them. What object, then, have our ladies in learning their language? If they can live in their dignity, we can live in ours; if they will hedge themselves in their divinity, we have only to follow their example. This is not my argument, this is the argument which our ladies adduce. I would, on the contrary, have every Mussulman girl taught some of the languages and literature of the West.

If English ladies had come forward and mixed with Mahommedan ladies, if they had set down on their visiting lists the names of some respectable Mussulman families, and had spared time to see and talk with their wives and daughters, they would have done far more to accelerate the work of social reform, to rivet the bonds of affection, than a whole mass of legislation.

These ladies would at first have found some difficulty in the want of common topics of conversation and in the difference of habits and tastes; but before the novelty had worn off, all these difficulties would have been smoothed by the creation of common subjects of interest. But English ladies must not enter our families with the patronising tone and manner which is considered the orthodox way of improving a people. They must converse with our ladies just as they would with their country-women and equals. There may be some difference in the *minutiæ* of etiquette; but in the natural ease and elegance of manners, in the frank simplicity and unaffectedness which stamp a lady everywhere, they will not find our women inferior to many European nations.

It could be wished that English ladies in India would follow the example of Madame MacMahon in Algeria, who, whilst studiously respecting the customs of Algerian ladies, tried to impart to them a knowledge of European life.*

Conversaziones, at which English, Mahommedan, and Hindoo ladies could meet and exchange friendly courtesies, would not only bring the English and the Mahommedan together, but would remove the race-prejudices which the Bengalli Hindoo often entertains towards the Mussulman.

Men must at present be excluded from such *conversaziones;* and though this may appear unnecessary to English ladies, a sense of duty in the cause which their husbands, and fathers, and brothers profess to promote will afford the motive; and something of the charm of simplicity, combined with frankness, might make the meetings not altogether tedious and devoid of interest.

Though there is no difficulty in English ladies visiting Mahommedan ladies, except such as exists on their own part, at first they will find it decidedly difficult to persuade our ladies to visit them. But better knowledge of each other would make them feel sure that they will be secure from offensive intrusions during their calls.

In this way, English ladies would do incalculable good, the beneficial

* During the Marshal's Governor-Generalship.

effects of which will not remain confined to one class ; it will gradually make its way from the upper to the lower strata, and the whole mass of society will be vivified with new life.

Mahommedan gentlemen have decided objections to allowing their daughters to attend schools with girls of other races, often of the lowest class ; and the lower classes of Mussulmans are deterred by motives of creed and difference of language. Many gentlemen now wish to avail themselves of English governesses, but are prevented by the difficulty in obtaining them, fear as to any tampering with the religious ideas of their daughters (a sort of feeling akin to what Protestants entertain towards Roman Catholic governesses), and such like. The corresponding members of this Association might do well to try to set these matters in a proper light.

In the meanti ne Government can give an extra impetus to the movement for education now going on among the Mahommedans, by attaching cheap primary girls' schools for the poor classes of Mussulmans to the existing endowments, as at Hooghly, Jessore, and other places in Bengal, Behar, and the North-west. The Itimad-ud-Dowla Fund in Punjab—a purely Mahommedan endowment—could be utilised for the same and cognate purposes.

I fear I have trespassed too long upon your attention, but the importance of the subject would not admit of any curtailment. And though I am aware I have neither treated it exhaustively nor in the way it really deserved, and have, in one or two places, been obliged to go over the same grounds as some English writers, I hope I have succeeded in throwing some new light upon the social condition of the Mussulmans of India, and in creating some interest in their favour among you.

But before I conclude, let me add that those who have really the good of India at heart—alike Hindoo, Mahommedan, and English—should forget their national prejudices and race-antagonisms in that one object.

"United India" should be the watchword of future progress.

S. TAYLOR, PRINTER, GRAYSTOKE PLACE, FETTER LANE, LONDON, E.C.

ASSOCIATION

IN AID OF

SOCIAL PROGRESS IN INDIA.

LONDON BRANCH.

ESTABLISHED 1871.

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I. The object of this Association is to assist the movements towards social improvement now taking place in India.

II. Although the social progress of two hundred millions of people is an object of such vast dimensions that it may appear at first sight to be utterly beyond the scope of any association of individuals to aid it, yet it must be remembered that movements of this nature generally commence with isolated efforts, widening by degrees till they embrace in their sphere of action whole communities of people.

III. The Committee are in possession of evidence that such movements have already begun, and that not from one, but from several indigenous centres in different parts of India. These efforts are clearly capable of being

materially assisted by the action of an Association like that for which they now venture to solicit public support.

IV. It would, however, be difficult to obtain adequate support in aid of an object of this kind without a more general knowledge than is commonly met with in this country of the social condition of India, and of the attempts that are being made there towards improvement. One of the main objects, therefore, of this Association will be to impart information by means of lectures, conversaziones, correspondence, and intercourse with the natives of India, and by the Journal of the Association.*

V. The objects of the Association, therefore, are the following :—

1. To impart information with the view of awakening general interest in this country in the social condition of the people of India.

2. To assist the movements now in progress in various parts of India towards general social improvement, and especially at present in respect to female education, the encouragement of schools of arts and industry, and friendly intercourse between the English and the Indian races.

3. To obtain information from all parts of India where efforts are being made in furtherance of any of these objects, by means of correspondence with leaders of thought and with reformers who are at present labouring, under enormous difficulties, in a field of unlimited extent.

4. To encourage as much as possible natives of India to visit England, and to assist those who do come to this country, by facilitating their introduction to English families, and affording them the means of becoming better acquainted, than they otherwise could be, with the domestic life of English people ; so that they may acquire a taste for the habits and pursuits of refined society, and have opportunities of studying to the best advantage English ideas, institutions, and customs.

VI. As the main purport of the Association is to effect its objects by co-operation and intercourse between people differing in race and creed, it is obvious that, for all purposes coming within the scope of the Society's operations, the common ground of absolute neutrality, in regard to religion, is the only position that can be occupied.

VII. One branch of the Association already exists at Bristol, and another at Edinburgh ; and it is hoped that, in course of time, branches will be established in other large cities.

VIII. The subscription to the Association is Ten Shillings and upwards per annum, which will entitle the Subscriber to all the privileges of membership. Associate Members subscribing Five Shillings per annum will be entitled to admission to lectures, the Monthly Journal, and other privileges, except the right of voting.

IX. The names of Subscribers, Donations, and Subscriptions, to be sent to either of the Honorary Secretaries, Miss E. A. MANNING, 35, Blomfield-road, W., or Rev. T. HUNTER, 8, Queen-square, W.C.

* The Journal is at present published monthly at Bristol, and may be had on application to Miss CARPENTER, Red Lodge House, in that city.